

*agent B1*  
acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid and salts thereof which are allowed to be used as food additives; and tocopherols. Preparations containing at least one of them are also included in the above reducing agent. The reducing agent to be used according to the present invention is not limited to those listed above as long as it is the one having a reducing effect.--

#### IN THE CLAIMS

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Please cancel Claim 1, without prejudice toward the further prosecution of this claim in a continuation and/or divisional application.

Please amend the claims as shown on the attached marked-up copy to read as follows:

*B2*  
2. (Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said raw material milk is selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof.

3. (Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said raw material milk is a casein-containing solution obtained by processing a raw material milk selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof.

4. (Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said reducing agent is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of reduced glutathione, cysteine,  $\gamma$ -glutamylcysteine, sulfurous acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid, salts thereof, and preparations containing at least one of these reducing agents.

5. (Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said reducing agent is added in an amount of  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $1 \times 10^{-1}$  g per 1 gram of non-fat milk solid, present in said raw material milk.

cont.  
B2 6. (Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said transglutaminase is caused to act upon the raw material milk in an amount of 0.001 to 20 units per 1 gram of milk protein, present in said raw material milk.

7. (Amended) A dairy product which has been obtained, or can be obtained, by using the raw material milk modified by the method of Claim 8.

Please add the following new claims:

B3 8. (New) A method of preparing a dairy product, comprising modifying a raw material milk by causing transglutaminase to act on said raw material milk, wherein a reducing agent is added to said raw material milk when said transglutaminase is caused to act on said raw material milk.

9. (New) The method of Claim 8, wherein said raw material milk is selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof, and

wherein said reducing agent is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of reduced glutathione, cysteine,  $\gamma$ -glutamylcysteine, sulfurous acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid, salts thereof, and preparations containing at least one of these reducing agents.

10. (New) The method of Claim 8, wherein said reducing agent is added in an amount of  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $1 \times 10^{-1}$  g per 1 gram of non-fat milk solid, present in said raw material milk.

11. (New) The method of Claim 10, wherein said transglutaminase is caused to act upon the raw material milk in an amount of 0.001 to 20 units per 1 gram of milk protein, present in said raw material milk.

12. (New) The method of Claim 8, wherein said transglutaminase is caused to act upon the raw material milk in an amount of 0.001 to 20 units per 1 gram of milk protein, present in said raw material milk.

13. (New) A modified raw material milk, prepared by a method, comprising modifying a raw material milk by causing transglutaminase to act on said raw material milk, wherein a reducing agent is added to said raw material milk when said transglutaminase is caused to act on said raw material milk.

14. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said raw material milk is selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof.

15. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said raw material milk is a casein-containing solution obtained by processing a raw material milk selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof.

16. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said reducing agent is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of reduced glutathione, cysteine,  $\gamma$ -glutamylcysteine, sulfurous acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid, salts thereof, and preparations containing at least one of these reducing agents.

17. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said reducing agent is added in an amount of  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $1 \times 10^{-1}$  g per 1 gram of non-fat milk solid, present in said raw material milk.

18. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said transglutaminase is caused to act upon the raw material milk in an amount of 0.001 to 20 units per 1 gram of milk protein, present in said raw material milk.

19. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said raw material milk is selected from the group consisting of raw milk, skimmed milk, partially skimmed milk, and processed milks thereof, and

wherein said reducing agent is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of reduced glutathione, cysteine,  $\gamma$ -glutamylcysteine, sulfurous acid, ascorbic acid, erythorbic acid, salts thereof, and preparations containing at least one of these reducing agents.

20. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said reducing agent is added in an amount of  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $1 \times 10^{-1}$  g per 1 gram of non-fat milk solid, present in said raw material milk.

21. (New) The modified raw material milk of Claim 13, wherein said transglutaminase is caused to act upon the raw material milk in an amount of 0.001 to 20 units per 1 gram of milk protein, present in said raw material milk.

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#### SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Applicants have amended the specification to delete "glycerine fatty acid esters; and lecithins" from the list of reducing agents. Applicants have also rewritten Claim 1 as new Claim 8. Support for new Claim 8 can be found in Claim 1, as originally filed. Claims 2-7 have been amended for clarity and to remove all multiple dependencies. Support for amended Claims 2-7 can be found in the same claims, as originally filed. Applicants